The Builder.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1852.

AT sheep and oxen have been taken out of their skins, and are exhibited in blue ribbons: the holly-berry has become visible to Cockneys: turkeys are slain, and plum-puddings made: little boys are looking joyous at the advent of holidays, and papas are looking glum at the accompanying bills: scene-painters and machinists are at work on pantomimes, and the few hardy Annuals left are showing their leaves: the musical talent of England exerts itself to make night hideous, and a general desire is felt to say and do something good and genial, if it be only because it is "the custom." In plainer language, *Christmas* is come,—the end of the year, and the close of our volume,—Christmas, with its holy and kindly influences,—the wonderful Birthday we have kept for Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-two years! "What a nice time it is," writes one to us, "it seems to prompt goodness and friendliness spontaneously. I do believe that its clear blazing firesides have some magic power over the heart, obliging it to think kindly of all, and to manifest the feeling in all sorts of pleasant ways." Ever may it be so; and let its influence last beyond the season!

Charity smooths many paths, removes asperities, and increases the sum of happiness. With the ancients the Charities and the Graces were identical. They were the daughters of Venus and Jupiter,—Beauty and Power;—and the divinity *Charis* was an embodiment of all the three: a beautiful and instructive myth. If our readers ask where we are wandering to, we must plead the date of our paper for an excuse, and leave to themselves the application of the remark.

It has always been our custom at the close of a volume to return our acknowledgments to co-adjutors and supporters, and we cannot persuade ourselves to abandon the practice at a time when our thanks are more than ever due. We have striven to increase the value and interest of our Journal; and, as the best return we can make for public favour, shall continue to do so strenuously. Design, all matters connected with the theory and practice of building, architectural jurisprudence, sanitary improvements, the architectural antiquities of the country, and the decorative arts, will have special attention in our pages, and we shall seek to treat the whole so simply, and to add so much matter of general interest and attractiveness, as to extend the circle of our readers far beyond the professional boundaries. It is of the greatest importance that the knowledge, judgment, and taste of the public at large should be improved. Without an educated public, a discriminating tribunal, the artist cannot advance. Our Journal ought to contain matter to interest every member of the state. We might almost reverse the mode of stating the proposition, and say that every member of the state ought to feel interested in the matter contained in our Journal. Its scope is constantly widening. That it is equal to its purpose we do not pretend to assert; but we will strive earnestly to make it more and more so.

England is a young country, not an old country, as some mistakenly assert. The energy in it at this moment is enormous: we are but commencing to move, and have a mighty future in store. Statesmen, as it seems to us, are beginning to have glimpses of their real duty,—the welfare and advancement of the people committed to their charge. The time is coming when leaders will have to *be* leaders, and the world will not be governed or trammelled by shams.

The recognition of the importance of the fine arts and practical science in the late speech from the Throne is a promising sign of the times, and the proposed Industrial and Artistic University will be looked forward to hopingly. The application of art to the manufactures of the country, and the general advancement and elevation of the industrial population, is no longer a matter of preference or otherwise, but one of vital necessity. If we stand still, other countries will not, and we shall be passed in the race. The mind must be set to work to aid the hand. As the Duke of Newcastle truly said at the late meeting of the Sheffield School of Design,—"These are days in which *education* is no longer one of the luxuries of life: it has become one of its greatest necessities, for all classes and for all grades of society. It has become the daily bread of us all."

Our younger readers in the less favoured ranks of life must bear this in mind, and strive, by application, right conduct, and strong will, to overcome the difficulties in their way. They must remember that unless seed be sown in the spring there will be no fruit in the autumn. If youth be wasted, the time when acquisition is easiest and habits of application and study most perfectly acquired, the chance of success in the future is greatly lessened, if not altogether destroyed. Let them especially remember,—

"How much genius wants, wanting vigour of *will*!
Power to plan must be linked to power plans to fulfil."

Returning for an instant to ourselves, it will be seen that we attribute to *The Builder* a widely-extending scope, a high and important purpose, and if, with power to plan, "power plans to fulfil" be given us, we will make it worthy of both.

THE HOUSES AND SHOPS OF OLD LONDON.*

WE will now glance briefly at the most important of the measures passed by the Parliament and City Common Council in connection with the buildings in London, and some other matters, from the time of Queen Anne till the commencement of the reign of George III.

On the 22nd of May, 1723, disputes about party-walls and spouts constantly arising between the citizens, the Parliament, to prevent this, enacted that if any person refused or neglected to build his share of a party-wall—after the due notice given to him—his next neighbour may build it for him, and oblige the person so neglecting to pay the charges of rebuilding it; and that the water falling from the tops of houses, balconies, and pent-houses shall be conveyed into channels or kennels by pipes in the front or sides of the houses, on pain of forfeiting 20*l*.

In 1725 Guy's Hospital was built, at the sole expense of Mr. Thomas Guy, who was formerly a bookseller of London.

The following is an instance of the imperfect condition of the London police in 1727:—At the time of the first visit to the City by George II. and his Queen, soon after their accession to the throne, the cities of London and Westminster had been greatly pestered for a considerable time past with a number of street robberies; and so audacious had they become, that they formed a scheme of robbing the Queen in St. Paul's Churchyard, as she came privately from supper in the City to St. James's Palace. This scheme was, however, frustrated by their being busily employed in robbing Sir Gilbert Heathcote, an Alderman of London, as he was returning in his carriage from the House of Commons, during which time her Majesty luckily escaped.

This circumstance greatly alarmed both the *Court* and *City*. Letters were immediately sent to all the magistrates, enjoining them to use their utmost endeavours to suppress such robberies; and many of the parties implicated being apprehended and executed, this barefaced system of robbery was, to a great extent, repressed.

In 1732 an epidemical distemper, which was also attended with fever, raged so violently in London, especially among the more advanced people, that not one aged person in six escaped its fury.

In February, 1733, the lord mayor, aldermen, and common-council presented a petition to Parliament that a Bill might be brought in to empower them to fill in that part of Fleet-ditch lying between Holborn-bridge and Fleet-street, and to convert the ground to such purposes as seemed most suitable. By virtue of an Act granted by Parliament, this part of the Fleet-ditch was arched over, and part of the site converted into a market, which was opened on the 13th Sept. 1737: by this means the nuisance of the Fleet-ditch was so far hidden from the sight of the London wayfarer, that many believed that the unsavoury stream was altogether covered from human sight, except such portions as they might have occasionally seen winding its almost stagnant course through the Hampstead fields; but until the last seven or eight years, the Fleet-ditch, with all its abominations, rolled uncovered through Clerkenwell and along the back of Field-lane. It had, by the time it reached the former site of Holborn-bridge, become a stream of no mean compass, increased as it was by the various offensive tributaries of Kentish Town, Camden Town, Islington, &c. New Farringdon-street was projected, and again a portion of the Fleet was arched: after that most people considered that the Fleet-ditch was a thing of the past, and only to be seen by the sewer guardian, or by some venturous "mud-lark," who might, in defiance of the threatened punishment, in search of gain, explore "the river" from its termination at Blackfriar's-bridge. So certain was it the unsightly Fleet was now hidden from the sight and smell, that several leading journals published congratulatory articles on the occasion. Unfortunately, however, this putrid river still passes uncovered through the heart of Clerkenwell: on its shores horses, &c. are slaughtered, other filthy trades pursued, the abominations of which we feel sure not one in a hundred of our readers can form a just conception of.

The execution of the London street robbers after the robbery of the alderman, would seem to have too much resembled the half-measures with which we are too familiar at the present day: the robbers had been destroyed by the score, but the causes which encouraged them remained, and in 1735 fresh troops of robbers and housebreakers rose up, owing, it is said, by the contemporary historians, "to the insufficiency of the lights at night." Application was made to Parliament, and the lord mayor, aldermen, and commonalty of London were empowered "to erect a sufficient number of such sort of glass lamps as they shall judge proper to be put in such places of the city and liberty as they shall think proper, to be lighted and kept burning from the setting to the rising of the sun throughout the year;" and, in order to defray the expenses of maintaining the same, the following rates and assessments were laid yearly on the inhabitants of the several wards: every house under 10*l*. per annum, charged to the poor, to pay 7*s*.;

* See p. 790, ante.

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